



Code: QA221  
Title: **Feedback on Modules and Programmes**  
Date: 06/06/2018  
Approval: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

### **Purpose**

Student feedback on modules and programmes

### **Description**

Every module and programme at NUI Galway must seek regular formal student feedback on aspects related to the student perception of the module and programme delivery, expectations, and/or their levels of engagement. This will result in an action plan by lecturers and programme boards for enhanced student learning and overall course delivery. The purpose of this feedback is to:

- Give students the opportunity to communicate their views on how they experienced the module in terms of teaching, organisation, and other relevant aspects;
- Promote student responsibility, engagement and partnership in the learning process;
- Provide course teams and lecturers with evidence of how they might improve the delivery and operation of the module/programme;
- Promote continued enhancement and innovation in teaching, learning, and assessment;

Schools and Colleges are responsible for ensuring that such feedback practices are undertaken, that appropriate actions (where identified) are taken in response to the feedback, and that students are subsequently informed of any resulting enhancements or changes.

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is an additional, national annual survey, the results of which can be broken down to the discipline level. It is in the best interests of the institution, the Colleges and Schools, students and staff, to ensure maximum engagement with ISSE. The extent to which ISSE data can provide sufficient information for programme level evaluation, should be considered by Colleges and Schools and all relevant student cohorts should be expected to complete the ISSE.

### **Feedback Instrument & Method**

Whilst there are a wide range of possible methods for obtaining and analysing feedback, each school is required to establish a formal process to do so, in a manner which is consistent and allows comparisons and analysis across modules and programmes. In large schools where the management of programmes or courses is devolved to Heads of Discipline or Programme Directors, the operation of the feedback process may also be devolved, but the instruments used and approaches taken should be consistent across the School and overall data and results shared with the Head of School.

The Dean of College has the authority to require each constituent school to adopt the same feedback procedure and instrument where this is thought necessary or useful. For Colleges with diverse disciplines, some of which may also have external accreditation requirements to consider, it is possible that approaches will need to vary.

### **Timing of Feedback**

Student feedback practices can be carried out in mid-semester (that can identify any issues or provide suggestions regarding the operation of the module whilst it is running), or at the end of a module or programme.

Survey fatigue may be an issue if students are subject to multiple requests for feedback. Schools, Colleges, and others seeking feedback from students should seek, where possible, to coordinate such requests, minimizing the number of separate surveys, schedule requests effectively, and ensuring that questionnaires are brief and focused on specific, key aspects.

### **Student Participation**

Whilst even surveys with low rates of return might still contain some useful suggestions from students, the overall validity of general feedback is dependent on the level of participation. It is important, therefore, that the College and School approach to student feedback aims to maximise the return rate. Increased participation may be facilitated by scheduling feedback completion during class time, coordinating across modules/programmes, and/or by working in partnership with Student Class Reps to promote engagement. This emphasises the importance of students seeing the value in this process by feeding back to them information regarding changes made as a result of their input.

Students are encouraged to avail of opportunities to provide feedback on modules, courses, and their approaches to learning. A university is a scholarly community in which all members make contributions to its development and operations. Completing feedback questionnaires, electing class representatives, participating in staff-student liaison committees, providing constructive suggestions, and actively engaging in study, are all highly valued contributions to the wellbeing of the institution and the enhancement of quality. When such feedback is sought, students (as is expected of respondents to any such survey) should respond respectfully and constructively, avoiding inappropriate language, tone, or comments. <sup>1</sup>

### **Independent Oversight**

Deans, Heads of School (or their nominees) are responsible for ensuring that the feedback process has been carried out and acted upon for all modules and programmes. Lecturers must provide evidence of this at the request of Deans and Heads, who may also request additional evidence from students.

### **Negative Comments**

Deans, Heads of Schools, and anyone else with delegated responsibility for overseeing feedback responses, must act with discretion when reviewing student feedback in cases where inappropriate, biased or personal comments have been made by students and should redact names of lecturers and other details as appropriate from all report, correspondence, or any other documentation arising from the process.

### **Gender Bias**

Schools and units should be mindful of the extensive literature on gender bias in teaching evaluations, which may disadvantage female staff. Accordingly, feedback instruments should be carefully designed to minimize opportunities for gender bias, and the possibility of unconscious bias should also be considered when analyzing responses.

### **Misuse of Data**

Notwithstanding the need to ensure any systems used for this purpose are fully compliant with Data Protection regulations (and the GDPR) and that the resulting data is managed appropriately, it is also important to recognise that student feedback surveys have intrinsic limitations and only provide one of many possible insights into the overall learning experience and the operation of a course. The data and information gathered should not be used for purposes other than that for which it was intended.

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents should take care to ensure that they avoid any bias on the basis of gender, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, faith, etc. Comments which are blatantly discriminatory or offensive are a violation of the Code of Conduct and not compatible with the ethos of the institution.

## Actions Arising

It is important that students (and relevant staff) are informed of any actions arising<sup>2</sup> from such feedback, or other decisions which have emerged from student consultation and contribution. This illustrates the value in participation and ensures that the process is a valuable aspect of the course delivery/design lifecycle.

## Summary Report and Compliance Survey

A report is to be submitted annually to the Registrar's Office by each Head of School and Dean, registering the following information: Module Code; Feedback Method; Timing; Participation Rate; Issues Identified; Actions Resulting; Feedback to Students. An example template is shown.

The Quality Office, from time to time, may undertake an 'audit' of the extent to which feedback processes are in place and will require assurance that the appropriate procedures have been followed to ensure that the institution is also in compliance with the expectations of national and European quality frameworks.

Module	Evaluation Method				Timing		Return rate (%)	Issues identified	Actions	Feedback to students
	Paper	Blackboard	Other Online	Other	Mid-Sem	End-Sem				
XYZ171		✓				✓	70	Volume of reading materials	Reviewed for next year	✓
XYZ172				✓	✓	✓	35	Practical sessions	Considered, but no need for change	✓
XYZ173	✓						65	No significant issue	None	✓
XYZ174	✓				✓		60	Class format, Assessment deadlines	Format change, schedule issued earlier next year	✓

## Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
<b>Individual Academic Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that student feedback is collected for each module for which they are responsible, using the appropriate School/College process<sup>3</sup>.</li> <li>Review feedback; implement any action which is identified as appropriate or useful, or which is required by the Head of School.</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Director</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that student feedback is collected for the programme, using the appropriate School/College process.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Or reasons why it might not be feasible to make suggested changes

<sup>3</sup> In many cases, in practice, this is carried out at the School or Discipline level and the individual lecturer is not involved directly in the data collection.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review feedback (on modules and programmes); prepare and implement an action plan based on student responses (where action is identified as required)</li> <li>• Inform students of any resulting actions or developments based on their feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Head of Discipline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee those aspects of the School/College feedback process for which they are identified as responsible by the Head of School/Dean</li> </ul>
<b>Head of School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit a summary document outlining the School's feedback processes and procedures to the Dean of the College and the Office of the Registrar (copied to the Quality Office)</li> <li>• Ensure that student feedback is obtained on modules and programmes.</li> <li>• Give due consideration to implementing changes on the basis of the feedback where such is deemed appropriate, and that students are informed of such.</li> <li>• Ensure that policies and procedures within the School are fully compliant with University policy, any requirements for professional accreditation, and quality regulations.</li> <li>• Submit an annual report/summary document to the Dean and the Registrar (through the Quality Office).</li> </ul>
<b>Dean</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall responsibility for the student feedback process and compliance with University policy across the College.</li> <li>• Has authority to require each constituent school to adopt the same feedback procedure and instrument where this is thought necessary or useful</li> <li>• Review student feedback with College Executive, Heads of School/Discipline/Programmes, and identify any resulting actions.</li> </ul>
<b>CELT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act in an advisory capacity to Colleges, Schools, Programme Directors, and individual staff in terms of approaches to feedback, methods, and issues regarding course enhancement and professional development</li> <li>• Provide examples of typical feedback instruments and questionnaires</li> <li>• Contribute towards the further development of this and related policies, provide recommendations based on emerging best practice (nationally and internationally) and research to the AMT and the Office of the Registrar</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate summary reports from Schools and Colleges on behalf of the Registrar.</li> <li>• From time to time, audit such processes at the School, discipline, programme, or College level and request information regarding the extent to which feedback is being collected, evidence of feedback, the methods used, and how such feedback is being responded to.</li> </ul>
<b>Office of the Registrar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that feedback on modules and programmes is placed on the agenda of the AMT (Academic Management Team) annually, allowing opportunities for the discussion both of the operation of the processes and to highlight any issues which are pertinent at the level of the university as a whole.</li> <li>• Work with others (Deans, UMT, Quality Office, support service heads, etc) to ensure that appropriate resources are available to support the routine operation of module and course feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraged to avail of opportunities to provide feedback on modules, courses, and their approaches to learning.</li> <li>• Respond respectfully and constructively, avoiding inappropriate language, tone, or comments.</li> </ul>